

# THE NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION

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ORGANIZED 1828

Many of my friends have urged that I compile outstanding

events of a busy life, covering ninety years, sixty-four of which I engaged in the practice of medicine, including the organization and establishment of a public hospital; plus active participation in many enterprises of civic welfare. If the reader finds benefit or fascination in what I have recorded, he will do so, not because of any unusual literary merit found herein, but because this record will show what can be done under many handicaps.

I was born in Hamilton, Canada, July 27, 1856. My family ties were somewhat conditioned, I believe, by my foreparents and parents fanatical fight for their rights. Our loyalties were strengthened by things we did for one another rather than by what we said. Father was man of few words, but very thoughtful. Mother inspired us toward high aspirations by her stories of how our grandparents overcame obstacles.

I recall mother telling us many times how her father was freed as a young man. Grandfather was useless to his master because he viciously resisted his master's attempt to bend grandfather's will. Grandfather told his master that he could seal him further South if the master so wanted, that he would not work for him because grandfather did not believe that slavery was justifiable.

I shed many bitter tears at mother's knee, hearing her stories of the depredation of slaves. Mother was born in Baltimore, Maryland. She had no recollection of actual slavery in her immediate family. She often entertained us with exciting stories

of her deportation, when a child, with several members of her family and other free colored people to Trinidad, British West Indies about 1838. The fact that the presence of free colored people increased the slaves' restlessness and dissatisfaction, had more to do with the American Colonization Society's interest in the deportation of free colored people to Liberia than any interest on the society's part in Liberia itself. This also accounts for the disfavor, held by the colored people as a whole, for the Colonization Society.

It is plain therefore, that prior to the Civil War, the so-called free colored people had few, if any, rights that the white man felt bound to respect. This mental attitude on his part, so hampered the colored people's ideas of themselves that it still shrouds their efforts to attain a more inclusive legal franchise for themselves.

Father's grandfather was a tribesman from the West African Coast. My paternal grandfather moved from the eastern shore of Maryland to Baltimore, having bought his freedom and his wife's freedom from his master. Father was born in Baltimore where he learned the brickmaking trade. He met mother there following her return to the states. Because of his exceptional skill, father saved sufficient money so that when he married, he was able to put mother in the home he had bought for her.

During the Civil War and immediately afterward, peddlers, many of them college graduates, toured our neighborhood. In addition to our own family, we also had boarders to feed. So we often bought one or two whole sheep from the meat peddlers. Much of our other household equipment such as brooms and cooking



utensils was purchased this way. My mother, at that time, felt very bitter about the institution of slavery and the Civil War. She had become quite friendly with several of these door to door peddlers and oftentimes discussed at length with them her bitter attitude toward slavery. During one of these discussions she made the statement that the best way to solve the situation would be for the Yankees to go through the South and kill all the babies in their cradles as nits make lice.

When my oldest brother, Charles and sister, May were born, father went to his employer and told him that he was taking his family to Canada because there were no facilities for his children's education in Baltimore. Father disposed of his Baltimore holdings about 1853, from which he secured enough money to buy a small tract of clay-land in Hamilton, Canada. There he established a brickyard of his own. He conducted his brickmaking trade there for about twelve years.

Father was anxious to become literate. By attending night school, he soon learned to read and write. It was evident after he went into business for himself that father had a strong propensity for mathematics as he was able to estimate the number of bricks he needed for any size contract, with amazing accuracy.

During the Civil War here, Canada suffered from a depression. Added to this fact, the young lawyer who supervised father's purchase of the Canadian property; and father, from a lack of training -- overlooked some of the intricacies of the British entail system, causing father to lose his property.

The two most outstanding and striking events of my short stay in Canada were indeed something to remember. First, the visit of King Edward VII when he was Prince of Wales, during the reign of his mother, Queen Victoria impressed me. Father took the day off with his family to participate in the parade. I sat in our carriage with father, my two sisters, and mother with baby in her arms. My two older brothers rode horse back on either side of the carriage. I think that the whole affair would have gone from my memory had it not been for the vast scene of soldiers in red uniforms. I recall also the visit to our home of the old British lady who claimed the land on which we built our home and established our business. Had we met the amount of her claim, it would have wiped us out of everything we possessed; for under the law, her claims covered not only the land, but all of the improvements and much of our personal effects. Through stealth, father was able to sell a young horse to the Union Army. With the proceeds, we moved to Lockport, New York where with a wife and six children, father found himself practically penniless with the necessity of assuming the position of a day laborer.

By coincidence, father soon met a man who speculated in real estate. The man built some houses and contracted father to make the brick for them, advancing father funds for some of the extensive outlay. With the brick as his down payment, father bought our house which the man built on High Street. Our house was cottage style with a porch extending all the way around it. Our house stood across the street from the site selected for the new school, for which father made the brick.



Our home was characterized by an air of rugged simplicity.

Our parents taught us the art of resourcefulness through the dent of hard work and stoic frugality. While we boys had to start working at a very early age with father, in the brickyard (I began at nine), we had the satisfaction of seeing his business grow and we were able later, to pursue our professional training through self-help.

To know Aaron Mossell was to trust him. Before long father secured the confidence of friends who extended to him sufficient credit which enabled him to establish his Lockport brickyard. Father's name was virtually synonymous with chasity and righteousness. The men who worked for him never used profanity in his presence. It wasn't that father ever indicated by speech that he forbade it; they just held him in such high regard.

I have never been able to account for father's unusual ability to figure on his contracts, many of them running into millions of bricks. I remember one occasion on which a large sewer had been put through the city. Another brickmaker and father had furnished the brick. A law suit was threatened concerning a question of veracity as to the number of brick furnished. Lawyers of the contesting sides measured and figured for weeks. Finally father was called in and after a short time, with the given dimensions of the sewer--he gave figures which were accepted by all sides as correct.

About fifty years ago, I met a man in West Philadelphia who worked with father in Baltimore. He told me that father set a record in Baltimore of making brick, one at a time, which has not been surpassed since. In two hours and forty minutes father

made 2480 bricks. In his prime, father was six-feet two, weighing about 175 pounds.

When I began working, father had only one man in his employment. Father's ambition and integrity enabled him to build up a trade so that he kept a constant crew of at least twenty men busy. Whenever he had to leave town in the interest of expanding his business, I supervised the work in his absence.

Although father spent his childhood and early youth in the South, he lived in Canada long enough to free his mind from that diabolical concept of white versus black. His actions revealed that to him a man is a man. Father had a skilled trade by which he supported his family. The success of his trade depended upon the patronage of whomever engaged him. As father's work increased, he needed more workers to help make it flourish. Men to do men's work.

Father employed men of all nationalities. If he had an unusually large contract or had to fill several simultaneously, he sometimes brought brickmakers in from the South. Father was aggressive. He had to be in order to make himself economically independent. He purchased land in Lockport on which he constructed several buildings. Father built a large hotel there which he leased. It stands today with the name, Mossell, on it. He built a house next door to us which he sold to his highest paid employee, Tracy, of Irish stock.

Father's work was systematic and accurate. As I remember, he encountered very little discrimination in his business. Hence my childhood was conditioned by an environment which propelled me toward a manly approach to life. The only man for whom I ever worked was father. I had no opportunity to become a white man's "boy".



To us, father was a towering giant. We recognized our inferiority to him in native ability and in strength of character.

He embodied strong virtues which I have always tried to emulate.

I do not recall ever hearing father or mother speak a harsh word to each other, in anger. I do not know of either ever doing an unrighteous act. During all my childhood, I do not remember any time when father failed to call us into the living room for morning and evening prayer.

Father was an elder and class leader in the African Methodist Episcopal Church for forty-five years. As evidence of his sincere interest in the church, there still stands in the cities of Lockport, New York and Hamilton, Canada--two churches built of brick which he donated for the entire erection. Mother attended church more or less regularly, but never was a communicant. She has been misled by the orthodox teaching that she had to have a feeling of exceedingly great joy. Thus she always felt unworthy.

I was not able to attend school regularly because father needed my help in the brickyard while he strove to meet pressing financial obligations. When I began working, Charles had gone to Lincoln University in Chester County of Pennsylvania. From there he went to Boston University where he completed his course in Theology, with which father and mother were tremendously in sympathy. I was very large for my years and at fourteen was able to do a man's size job. I did not complain to father because I understood and sympathized with his struggles. Yet I shed many tears when I heard the school bells ring of mornings. An older brother's recent death caused father to need my help all the more. I soon became familiar with all branches of the trade and when I could forget my disappoint-

ment in not being able to attend school, regularly, I became capable and efficient, giving father great satisfaction.

Five of us children reached adolescence. Charles became a minister and spent eight years in Haiti. A younger brother, Aaron, who lives in England, became a lawyer. He has three children; Sadie Mossell Alexander, a practicing attorney in a law firm with her husband, Raymond Pace Alexander, Esquire, in Philadelphia; Aaron, Junior, a pharmacist in Philadelphia; and Bessie Mossell Anderson, Dean of Women at Wilberforce University. My younger sister, Alberetta, died later while doing mission work with Charles in Port Au Prince, Haiti. My older sister, Mary, married Professor Parker Denny, teacher in the public schools of Princeton, New Jersey. Her only daughter is the wife of Attorney A. T. Walden of Atlanta, Georgia. My double cousin, Frank Bowers, by marriage of my mother's brother to father's sister was the first colored person ever appointed to a white collar job in Baltimore. He was placed in the Post Office.

In later years, father built a large two-story house near his brickyard. The house had three entrances with a hall running through the center and rooms on either side. I proudly shared in the making of our new house by painting all of it. The interior was arranged very simply with straight-back chairs and plain stern tables. The floors were covered with Brussels carpets. An organ and piano, in the living room, provided musical entertainment for the family.

This homestead later became of special interest to my two daughters as they spent some of their happiest childhood summers there. They climbed fruit trees in the orchard which extended on the rear of our premises. Sometimes they had to be summoned from



from the big cherry tree in the front yard for their meals. I could not blame them a bit because those huge black cherries were very palatable to me. Romping on the front lawn was their delight. They still remember the well-stocked pantry and their rides in the family surrey which was used on special occasions.

One of my earliest conscious contacts with race prejudice occurred when I was nine years old. I was sitting on the fence railing of our yard, watching the Yankee soldiers come home from the front on our street. One soldier came up to me and knocked me off the fence with the butt of his gun, shouting, "Here's a nigger". This made me realize that many of the northern soldiers did not fight in the Civil War to free the slaves, but rather to avenge their personal feelings.

In the course of time the city built a new school on High Street directly opposite of our house. The contract for the brick was awarded to father. Because the contract was rather large, consisting of several hundred thousand brick and because the school was for civic betterment, the Board of Public Education had little difficulty in inducing father to give the lowest possible figure. When the building was completed, father instructed the younger children to attend this school rather than a little school building some distance away which had been set aside for colored children where all the grades were taught in one room.

Charles and Mary had finished the lower grades in public school before we moved from Canada. The glee and enthusiasm with which Aaron, Alberetta, and I entered this school was soon brought to grief. The teacher refused to recognize our presence. We continued attendance at the school for a number of weeks. When

classes were called, we went forward to take place in the line-- especially for spelling and reading lessons. This procedure naturally interrupted the school decorum, giving the teacher all kinds of difficulty in maintaining discipline. These incidents did not discourage us in the least. We were fired to greater effort.

Finally, a special meeting of the Board of Education was called, at which Charles was permitted to attend. He had already been permitted to attend the Lockport High School and was then making preparations to leave for college. He made a protest against the treatment we were receiving. The president of the Board, who at some time previous, had become a customer of father, told the Board that the young man's speech had convinced him that a grave injustice would be done if the school further refused to admit the children to the classes. The majority of the Board conceded and the incident was closed, (so was the separate school which had been set apart for colored children).

My childhood was not entirely blighted. I fitted in with the boys at school very well, having proved my prowess. When I went to school or on an errand, I usually encountered some of the gang in front of the corner grocery. We lived in the middle of the block. One corner led to the country, the other toward town and school. Whenever a new boy moved into the neighborhood, it was my duty to lick him. The only way in which I could have avoided this task was to take the round-about way through the country. The fellows knew that I did not want to go to the country when I went on errands or to school. As much as I hated to fight, I refused to be called "coward".



In 1871 Charles sent for me to come to Lincoln University

and I planned toward that end. I left home in the fall to enter

Lincoln University's preparatory department, which was abolished

afterwards. The preparatory curriculum ordinarily required four

years, but I finished in three. I graduated from college with an

A. B. in 1879 and was awarded the Bradley Medal for excellence in

the Physical Sciences. I was interested in my younger brother,

Aaron's welfare, so I suggested to father that I would support my-

self while completing my professional education, if he permitted

Aaron to attend college. Father agreed.

When I entered Lincoln seventy-six years ago, I had had very little personal experience with the handicaps of racial antipathies. Father, who was instrumental in having Lockport abolish the separate school for colored, was highly respected by all in the community. He had a number of white men in his personnel, thus giving me little chance to encounter the typical pussy footing attitudes held by many of the colored people who are offshoots of southern soil. Therefore, my present political and social ideas on the race problem began to crystalize as my experience grew.

I observed the "Uncle Tom" tendencies in many fellows at Lincoln on a number of occasions before I later realized what was wrong. One instance shocked me when we played a game, called in those days, . It is similar to soccer except that the ball must be kept in the air either by one kicking it or hitting it with his fist. Professor John Randall, nephew of President Randall of the university, played with us whenever he had a chance because he was very fond of the game. He ran faster than me. Whenever he was my opponent on the other team, I managed to cut in front of

him, catching him across my shoulders, then throw him. Sometimes the mud was six inches deep. Of course after a couple of throws, he looked a sight. I was six-feet one, weighing about 200 pounds. The boys nicknamed me "Horse". During these games they would say, "Did you see Horse throw the professor?" Professor Randall always replied, "Hossell is playing the game". He was a good sport. To me, Professor Randal was just another opponent on the field of sports, not a professor or a white man.

I was able to understand, later, why education alone does not dispel racial fear in men who inherit this legacy. In the late eighteen hundreds, the people of Philadelphia had a mass meeting, protesting against the riots in Wilmington, North Carolina which forced a number of people to flee from their homes and come North. The meeting was held at the Academy of Music and practically the whole town turned out. Booker T. Washington was in town that night and heard about the meeting. I was presiding when he came over and learned of his presence. I called on him to say something in behalf of our protest. The first and only words Mr. Washington said pertaining to our rally was, "Ladies and Gentlemen: I am heartily sorry that the interest of my work in Tuskegee, Alabama will not permit me to discuss in detail, the recent race conflict in Wilmington, North Carolina." He then told us about his school. Booker Washington's work was in the South. He had no protection while he remained there. Therefore he could not protest, openly, against the Ku Klux Klan, The Night Riders, nor their methods of suppression.

Despite logical explanations for Mr. Washington's "hat-in-hand" actions and thinking or for the mob violence of the unreconstructed rebels, neither methods are reconcilable to the democratic



way of life. Therefore I have persistently resisted and opposed both extremes.

While I studied at Lincoln, a white girl in the vicinity was assaulted and left to die. After her parents reported her missing a group of us students and white people of the neighborhood combed the country side in search of her. After a long while we discovered her when we overheard her moans. She had been thrown into an empty well. When we got her out, she recognized her assailant and pointed him out. He was a colored fellow who lived in the same neighborhood as she. He was an illiterate farm hand whom we all knew by seeing him come to the Post Office. He joined the searching party in hopes that she had died. A white fellow went into a barn and got a rope. The fellows became greatly incensed and would have given vent to their feelings. I jumped up and shouted to the crowd that it would have to lick me before it could do violence to this suspect, that he should be handled by due process of law. I was able to prevail with the fellows as they respected me highly. Because of mitigating circumstances, the youth was given a term of a year or two. The girl later entered a house of assignation in Philadelphia.

Early in my college days, I planned temporarily to become a civil engineer. I was my best in mathematics, having received higher marks in it than in any other subject and therefor I felt better suited for it. I corresponded with the secretary of the faculty of the Polytechnic Institute of Troy, New York and was assured that I was welcome. Finally, I concluded that the expense associated with pursuance of the course was beyond my ability to reach.

It is not clear to my mind, just now, as to why I chose to take medicine as my profession. I know, however, that I was determined to take my professional course at an institution with an outstanding reputation. That led me to select the School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. It is just barely possible that this selection was partially influenced by the fact that during my Junior and Senior years at Lincoln, I met a young lady who resided in Philadelphia, in whom I became interested and planned finally to marry.

Upon graduation from Lincoln, I delivered a philosophical oration in conjunction with my receiving the Bradley Medal at the commencement exercises. A Mr. Dodge, well-to-do gentleman who was present, was so impressed with my oration that he offered me one hundred dollars a year toward my professional training. He was very generous for I induced him to aid several students who would also pursue advanced training upon graduation from Lincoln. Later, my Alma Mater conferred an honorary M. A. degree upon me in 1884.

After leaving Lincoln, I visited Dr. James Tyson, Dean of the Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania, in the fall of 1879, and made formal application for admission to the opening session of the School of Medicine. I was promptly informed and made formal application for admission to the opening session of the School of Medicine. I was promptly informed that the department had never admitted a colored student. Dr. Tyson said that personally he favored my admission, as he was of Quaker extraction and felt inclined to follow the tradition of his sect in its efforts to help colored youths who desire to better their conditions. He further stated that he thought it necessary to submit my applica-



tion to the  
 tion to the faculty for approval. Personally he felt that since Harvard and Yale admitted colored men to their medical departments, Penn should be equally liberal. At a subsequent date, fixed by Dr. Tyson, I called and was informed that the faculty voted in my favor I was told that I would have to take care of myself, that the faculty could not be my father and mother. I assured Dr. Tyson that he need not worry; that I was capable.

Once, I had thought of going to Liberia after completing my course in medicine. Hence before the opening of Medical School I visited Rev. Dr. Henry Hyland Garnet, pastor of the Colored Presbyterian Church on Fifty-third Street, in New York City. He had served as Minister to Liberia from this government for some years. I also visited the Federal Building in New York City where cadets from West Point were being tried for the hazing and maltreatment of Whittaker from South Carolina, West Point's first colored student. I was particularly impressed with what seemed to emanate from Whittaker's early environment. His lack of courage and in all probability, his inferiority complex contributed much to his inability to stem the tide of depredations heaped upon him. Whittaker's failure at West Point did not discourage me, but rather, fired me with a determination to overcome every future obstacle.

On October 15, 1879, I attended the opening lecture at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. I walked down the center aisle in the capacity-filled amphitheatre to a seat very near the front. From both sides of the aisle I was accompanied by a storm of protest. It sounded as if everyone stomped his feet as the crowd hissed in a steady rhythm "Put the D...nigger out."

A student by whom I sat asked me why I did not get up and tell them, "go to hell". I replied that I was not disturbed the least bit; whereupon he jumped on the seat, turned his face to the crowd and said in a ringing voice, "Go to hell! You act like a pack of d...fools." In response he got some applause, making me know that everyone had not participated in the first demonstration. Following the lecture, two young men who were in attendance, overtook me in the street and expressed their regret over what had occurred. They said that they hoped I had not been frightened away and that I would return. I thanked them and told them not to let the matter give them concern.

For the first year I had plenty of space around me wherever I sat. Very few students sat nearby. In fact, during the first session, the student body sent a message to the faculty protesting my presence. I was not perturbed, in the least, by any of these manifestations of disapproval. I was better prepared than most of the students. In those days one needed only a high school diploma to study medicine. Out of a class of 140-odd, about 30 of us had Bachelor of Arts degrees. During my last two years at Lincoln, I engaged a Doctor Eaves for a nominal fee to give me quizzes on my readings in medicine. He was the University physician with an office in Oxford, Pennsylvania and he made periodical visits to the university to examine and treat students.

The dissatisfaction stirred me to work harder and better. I attended lectures regularly, making sure to hear every word, and see all of the operations and demonstrations. I read the texts in advance so that I would not have to take notes in class. In this way I retained the information much better. To accomplish this, I arose at four every morning and retired at ten in the evening.



Unofficially, I heard that one or more of the faculty voted against my admission, originally. This perturbed me because I was never able to determine which ones, if any, voted against my admission. It would be unfair even now, to name those whom I suspected. It is sufficient to say that I prepared myself so thoroughly on the subjects, taught by those whom I suspected; it would have been impossible for them to flunk me without committing rank injustice.

The gross manifestations of race hate faded away after the first year when it was relayed through the corridors that I made a perfect mark (100%) under Doctor R. A. F. Penrose, professor in Obstetrics and Diseases of Children. I was much elated of course with my marks. I did not give myself as much credit as I gave Dr. Penrose because to my mind he was the best teacher to whom I ever listened. It was with little difficulty that I memorized every important point he made in his whole course of lectures. I was never conscious of his ever having looked at, or spoken to me during the whole session; causing me to suspect him as one of the faculty who had voted against my admission. After receiving this perfect score under him, I felt that I had been mistaken.

At the beginning of my second year, I noticed a marked difference in the attitude of the students. I no longer had room to lie down on the bench on which I sat between lectures. However, one student stubbornly refused to acquiesce to my presence, for some time. Our Chemistry Lab was divided into sections. The poor hunchback was assigned to the end of our section. I sat next to him. He ignored me until one day he asked me to help him with an assignment. I asked him why he did not get the assistance of one

of his friends. He did not answer. After I opened my office at 924 Lombard Street, I saw him, often, sitting in front of his father's cigar store at Pine and Thirteenth Streets. He failed in Lab and never finished his training.

The conduct of the student body at our commencement was a marked difference from that at the time I entered Penn. When my name was called and I ascended the stage of the Academy of Music to receive my diploma, the students in the pit of the hall, greeted my name with almost deafening applause. I was among the honor students.

The fact of my successful entrance and graduation from the Medical Department was widely publicized, especially in the weekly colored papers throughout the country. This focused the attention of a number of colored students on Penn, thus encouraging them to apply there for admission.

A year before my graduation, in 1831, I married Miss Gertrude E. H. Bustill. She is the granddaughter of David Bustill, who was a member of the Hicksite Quaker Sect. She is the great granddaughter of Cyrus Bustill who was a baker in the Colonial Army under George Washington, and sister to the late Louise Bustill Robeson, mother of Paul Robeson, the renown actor and singer.

We have two daughters, Mary C. Griffin and Florence Alma Holmes. Mary has one son, Francis, who teaches high school in Baltimore. Florence has two daughters and one son. Dorothy Fassitt Banton is Superintendent of the Kruss Industrial School for Girls in Marshalton, Delaware. Gertrude N. Williams teaches in Riverton, New Jersey. The son, John T. Nickolson is a licensed mortician in Philadelphia.



My wife accomplished many things in her own right as well as assisted me in my work. She was one of the founders of the National Women's Party with headquarters in Washington, D. C. She and I together helped spearhead the Woman's Suffrage movement in Philadelphia.

Before she was needed at home, my wife was a reporter for the local dailies: Daily Press, Times, and Philadelphia Inquirer. Later she became a feature writer for the North American, also a daily. She edited a book, The Work of the Afro-American Woman and contributed to a large number of colored journals. She contributed a chapter, "The Value of the Press and Its Contributions," to the book, The Afro-American Press, a history of colored journals. Mrs. Mossell is the second oldest living colored school teacher in the Philadelphia School System.

When I began my practice in South Philadelphia where I have continued for the past sixty-four years, my experiences were similar to that of most young men who must gain public confidence in order to succeed. My circle of acquaintances was enlarged during this time by the fact that I was appointed an examining physician in the Industrial Department of the John Hancock Insurance Company.

There were about five colored physicians serving the city then. Three of these were regular graduates. Now there are more than two hundred practicing colored physicians. There were two women: Dr. Rebecca Cole who later married Rev. Mathew Anderson, and Dr. Caroline Still Wiley who married Dr. E. C. Howard. In those days, most women were unpopular as physicians. Neither of these women found her practice at all lucrative. There was Dr. David Roselle who died a few years before I began practicing.

Robeson, mother of Paul Robeson, the renowned actor and singer.

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In 1895 there were six colored students in the department of medicine at Penn. They organized the N.F. Mossell Medical Society. In lieu of this honor, I volunteered to give them regular service as their quiz master during the period of their studies. All save one, successfully passed their examinations. A.N. Lushington took the veterinary course, succeeding admirably in Lexington, Virginia. L.B. Palmer became an outstanding physician in Atlanta, Georgia. Samuel B. Stafford, who served as my secretary during his student days, became an outstanding physician in St. Louis, Missouri. Jacinto Zarratt returned to his home in Porto Rico and sent his sister to the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia where she finished, later. F.J.L. Johnson began his practice at his home town, Washington, Pennsylvania. Colored students enrolled at the Medical Department for a number of years after my graduation.

Many of these early students at the University came without proper conception of the financial outlay necessary to their proper maintenance. This, together with the fact that I had myself received assistance during my student days, through benevolent friends, gave me the urge to do what I could to help a number of these young men. For a number of them I found friends who bore their entire tuition. Others, I was able to help, in part, personally.

I developed a desire to further perfect my knowledge in surgery during my student days. At once following graduation, I sought to be associated with the Out-Patient Surgical Department of the University. Dr. D. Hanes Agnew, Head Surgeon of Penn,



gave me a letter of introduction to Dr. Shoemaker, Chief of the Out-patient Surgical Department, telling him that it was Dr. Agnew's personal desire that I be given an opportunity to serve the department. On entering, I noticed that other young graduates who entered like myself as volunteer workers, without previous appointment as assistants, did not present any letters of introduction. So I held back mine, in case of eventualities. It was not long before I was forced to notice that Dr. Shoemaker was ignoring me. After several weeks of this "I am not aware of your presence," I gave the letter to Dr. Shoemaker. It was as if the man had been shocked by a bolt of lightning when he read the letter. All evidences of resentment to my presence immediately disappeared.

I was an assistant in this department for something more than two years. Internship was not required by law then, but I never have believed in doing things half-way. I took a Postgraduate course at the Philadelphia Polyclinic, now known as the Post Graduate School of the University of Penn in order to prepare myself for the job before me.

In 1888 I was solicited by Dr. J. Britton Massey, specialist in Electro Therapy, to let him present my name for membership in the Philadelphia County Medical Society. It is quite evident to me at this writing that he expected that I would be rejected. He told me that he was born in the South. He insisted that southern people were more friendly to the colored race than

white people born in the North. When he asked me whom I wished him to consult as my endorsers, I gave him the names of Dr. D. Haynes Agnew and Dr. James Tyson.

In a discussion which ensued when my name was presented, Dr. Tyson made a statement which appeared in the "Medical News" of May 20, 1882. It seems that his statement was also provoked by a discussion as to the advisability of promoting separate colleges for colored when he said, "Dr. Mossell had graduated with an average higher than three fourths of his class." I have no record of what other discussions may have followed since I was not present at the meeting. I do know that I was duly elected.

Women physicians had been knocking at the doors of the County Medical Society for admission almost from the date of its organization, without success. Immediately after my admission, it seemed only necessary for them to say, "Admit colored men and refuse us." The doors were opened and no more argument seemed necessary.

When the idea of Douglas Memorial Hospital came to me out of the necessity for providing a place where young colored women could train for nursing; I was particular to explode the taboo against women physicians in hospital management. Women physicians were associated with Douglass Hospital from its inception. Dr. Grace Duguid, now Dr. Grace Kimbrough was the first woman interne at Douglass.



Following my work with the University, I was soon given "a slap in the face" by the institution through one of my patients. I had not been practicing long when I sent a white woman patient to the Surgical Department for treatment. I diagnosed her case as needing major surgery and gave her a letter to Dr. Agnew. By this time, Dr. Agnew had turned over most of his surgery to his assistant, then, Dr. J. William White of the family which manufactures dental products. When Dr. White read the letter, he said to the patient, "Why did you go to him? He's a Negro!" The woman was incensed by this remark.

After Douglass Hospital had been established for several years, I felt it necessary to increase my knowledge of surgery by making observations and a study of European methods as used in England. I went abroad for graduate study at the Saint Thomas Hospital, London, England, in the spring of 1898 and returned in the fall of the same year.

One of the first facts to strike me, most poignantly there, was that where education and job promotions are concerned; prejudice against people of color is an unknown entity. Many colored Americans are driven abroad to seek professional advancement because of the caste system here. On visiting the hospitals in London and Edinburgh, I noticed, especially, a large number of American colored students in attendance. The House Surgeon at the London College of Surgery, a man of the highest standing, ability and eminence was colored.

I was given a splendid letter of introduction from Professor W.W. Keen of the Jefferson Medical College. Due to the high esteem in which he was held by the medical circles of Continental Europe, I gained interviews with some of the foremost surgeons there. I found that the British and Scotch methods of operations in practical surgery were somewhat different from those of Americans. By assimilating these factors with what I had already learned in my previous experiences, I greatly benefited from these advanced studies.

Upon my return to the states, a reception was tendered me by the Board of Managers, Staff, and Ladies Auxiliaries of the Douglass Hospital at the Cherry Street Baptist Church, pastored by Rev. W.A. Credit. Thereafter, my work with the hospital was accelerated to a terrific pace, which did not slacken until about thirteen years ago.

In my association with medical organizations, I helped spearhead the National body of the National Medical Association whom I served as president in 1906. I was also active in the local group. In 1908 I prepared a pamphlet on "Hospital Construction, Organization and Management," for the NMA. I am also co-founder and life member of the Philadelphia Academy of Medicine and Allied Sciences. After making careful observations on the origin of phlebitis following abdominal operations, I prepared a paper in 1901, showing that phlebitis following an Abdominal operation is of septic origin. Some medical journals



have published in recent years that my analysis was among the first to show clearly and conclusively that this is the case.

Other civic activities included my participation in the church's educational program. During the first year of my practice, I was president of the Literary Society of the Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, on Sixth Street below Pine, succeeding Dr. James Frisby who had recently died. These meetings were well attended and contributed much to the cultural advancement of the community.

By the time I moved my office to 924 Lombard Street, I was closely associated with a group of citizens who spearheaded the Independent Political movement among colored citizens. Wm. Still, author of The Underground Railroad, and Robert Purvis headed the group. We supported the election of the first Democratic Mayor, Samuel L. King, in Philadelphia after the close of the Civil War.

My political activity was always the non-partisan type. Just prior to my graduation from Lincoln, I was much incensed by the Republican Party's desertion of the black people in the South, incident to their disfranchisement. The Party turned over the control of the southern states to the former masters of the slaves in the trade for Hayes' election to the Presidency. Racial disturbances of all kinds followed on the heels of Hayes' election. The North bargained with the South to remove the troops which had been placed in the South to guarantee fair elections. After this agreement was made, the South permitted

the selection of Hayes over Tilden in the Electoral College. Thus, with the troops gone, the ex-slaves were left to the mercy of local political authorities. It was then that the colored people of the whole South were disfranchised by the Ku Klux Klan, The Night Riders, and other unreconstructed rebels. This incident has more to do with the present-day desertion of the colored vote from the Republican Party than most people recognize.

Many civic activities of the colored people in South Philadelphia were centered in the area of my immediate neighborhood. When there were not many organized political and civic groups, my home became a clearing house for setting up local machinery. Many people who came through town stopped at my home while here. Purvis, Still, Bishops B.F. Lee and Vei Crummel of the A.M.E. Church, James Leedom, Grandworthy Secretary of the Odd Fellows and Discount Clerk at City Hall, and others spearheaded some of our most progressive organizations of that day in Philadelphia.

Before the organization of the Lincoln Alumnae, my home became headquarters for alumnae. In 1882 the Philadelphia Alumnae of Lincoln made its first organized effort to get graduate representation on the Faculty and Board of Trustees at Lincoln University. As chairman of the Committee of the Alumnae, I was sent to bend the ear of the Board of Trustees.

I co-founder of the national organization of the National Association for The Advancement of Colored People which was formed in 1906. Among others of the founders who helped conceive the prospectus of this organization were; Oswald Garrison Villard, son-in-law to the great abolitionist and editor, William Lloyd



Garrison; Dr. Wm. A. Sinclair, author of The Aftermath of Slavery.

One may wonder how a physician can find so much time to champion the cause of his people. I have been no less spared from the indignities of segregation and discrimination than the non-professional colored person. In waging a fight to help free others from the infringements of Jim Crowism, I also help free myself. One unforgettable incident out of the enumerable like situations which I encountered, occurred a number of years ago when I was mistaken for the late Jack Johnson by the policemen in Atlantic City, New Jersey. They were on the look-out for this Champion Heavy-Weight Boxer who had been persecuted because of his marriage to a white woman..

I called at the home of a friend in Atlantic City who had an out-of-town guest stopping with her. A member of the Board of Directors of Douglass Hospital asked me to make this guest's acquaintance. After paying my respects to the two ladies, I begged to leave. They asked me where I was going. As I had no particular place in mind, I invited them to take a short ride. We drove to Egg Harbor. On our way back, a couple of motorcycle police followed us into Atlantic City. When we got to Michigan Avenue, I drove up alongside a trolley which had stopped to unload passengers. I stopped in accordance with traffic regulations and sped past the trolley when it moved. When I stopped the car in front of my friend's home, one of the officers drove up and told me that I was under arrest. I asked him why. He said that I violated the traffic regulation

when I passed the trolley without stopping. I denied the charges and said that I would return the next week for a hearing. My friend's husband went on the bond for me. I was using a garage for storing my car during my brief respite in the city. Since I did not need it anymore that day, I put it up for the night. The garage attendants hailed me, asking me what it was all about. They heard that "you were riding with a bunch of white women." The police had mistaken me in their apprehensions of the boxer.